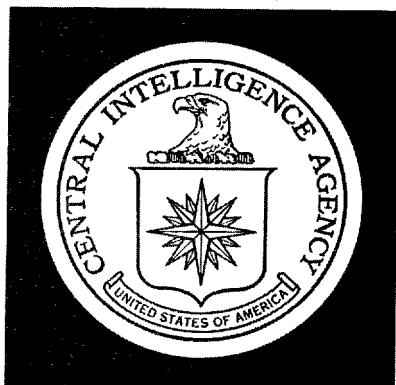


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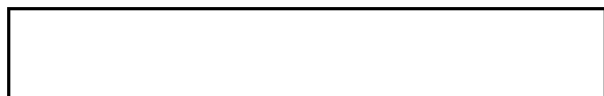


DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

INDICATIONS OF FORTHCOMING COMMUNIST
OFFENSIVE ACTIVITY IN SOUTH VIETNAM

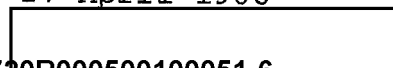
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
27 April 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Indications of Forthcoming Communist
Offensive Activity in South Vietnam

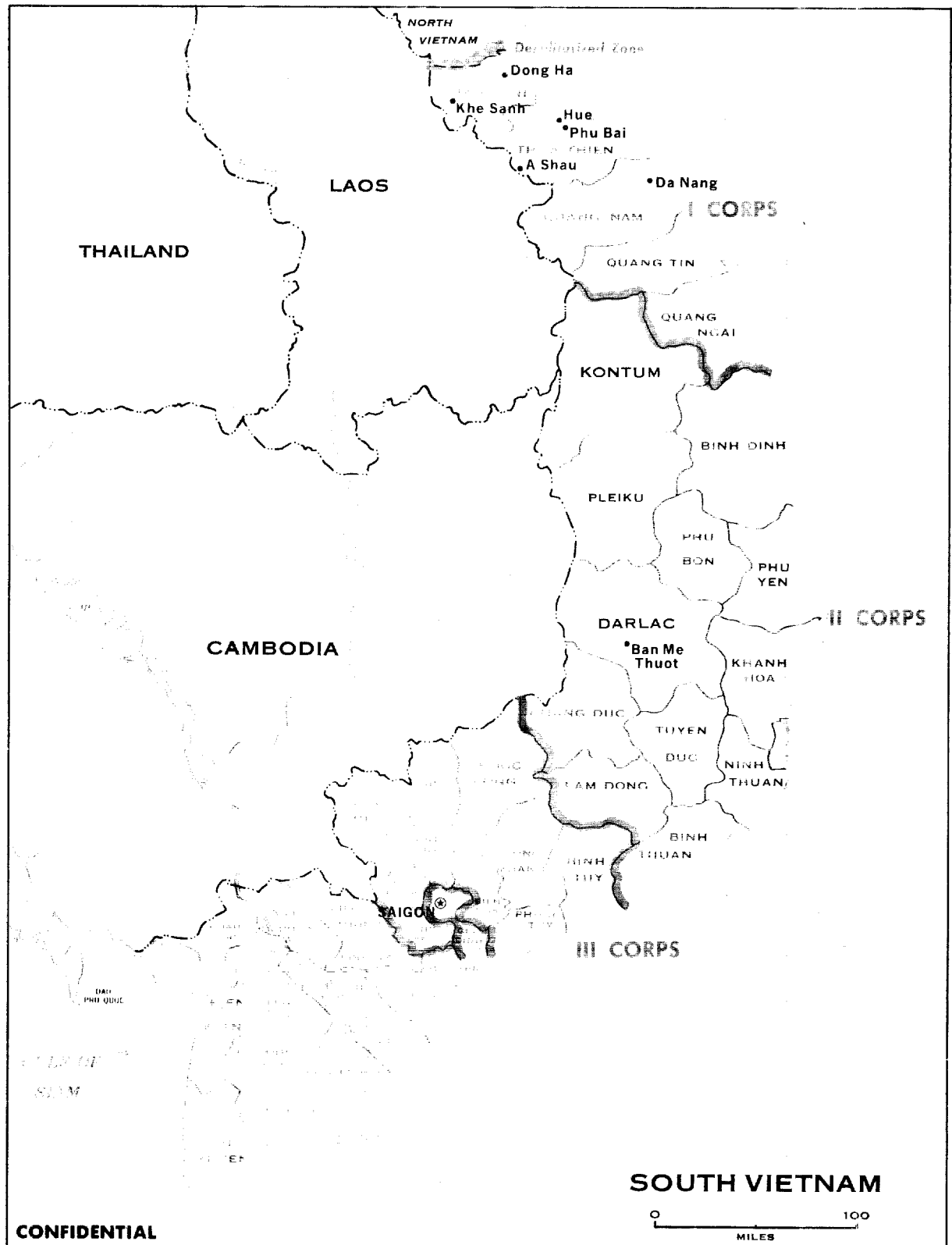
1. There are a number of indications that Communist forces in South Vietnam are preparing for major offensive action. If mounted, these actions apparently will be carried out within the context of a renewed "general attack" phase to open the enemy's "summer campaign." Any major new military offensive will certainly be accompanied by intensive political action directed at a "general uprising" and by subversive operations against the ARVN and the GVN. Such attacks would be intended to further the double aim of influencing US and international opinion and, in South Vietnam, of eroding the GVN and contributing to the disintegration of ARVN as an effective force.

2. The evidence on the Communists' timetable is conflicting. Some reports and sources suggest major action in at least some areas (e.g. Saigon and I Corps) within the next few days. Other signs point to mid-May or even later.

3. Preparations for major military action appear complete in some areas, but preparations in others still seem to be incomplete. Moreover, operations by allied forces may pre-empt Communist

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Director's Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs and coordinated with the Office of Current Intelligence and the Office of National Estimates.

Key to Places Mentioned in Text



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plans in some areas and disrupt any timetable the Communists now have. The Communists almost certainly would limit the scope of their initial effort to the extent necessary to retain the capability for further major action later in the summer as a means of influencing negotiations. We would thus anticipate that the forthcoming offensive phase would be more analogous to the intensified operations that opened the winter-spring campaign last November than to the all-out "one-shot" thrust of the Tet offensive. The new campaign would thus probably include major assaults on selected cities (e.g. Saigon and probably Hue) accompanied by widespread harassment of allied bases and command and administrative facilities, all designed to regain the initiative temporarily in some areas, cause maximum destruction to allied support facilities, inflict maximum damage to RVNAF units, erode GVN authority in as many areas as possible, produce a further setback to pacification, and generate a political and psychological reaction abroad, particularly in the US, favorable to Communist interests.

Signs of Preparations

4. The indications of impending offensive action can be grouped into three categories: those reflecting movements and improved capabilities; those indicating active planning and battlefield preparations for specific operations; and those suggesting over-all plans for a new phase of activity.

5. There are numerous signs that the recent period of disengagement and regrouping has ended and that Communist units are moving back into a posture of operational readiness. These signs include reports of the arrival of infiltrated replacement groups at Khe Sanh and elsewhere, suggesting that units are being brought back to strength. Recently arrived reinforcement units have been identified near A Shau. Communist command elements displaced from Khe Sanh during recent allied operations have returned to that area. An unusual concentration of units--possibly involving elements of the

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320th Division, which had earlier moved north of the DMZ--has been reported near Dong Ha. Other NVA units are moving in the vicinity of Hue and Phu Bai. The NVA 2nd Division apparently is moving back to normal operational areas near Da Nang after a brief respite in border sanctuaries. The NVA 325th Division has arrived in the Kontum sector, and the 174th and 32d regiments also appear to be moving back into operational areas in the other highlands provinces of Pleiku and Darlac.

6.

In the delta, the Communists appear to have formed seven new battalions in the past few months, potentially increasing their regular forces there by one third.

7. Active planning and battlefield preparations are indicated in reports from a number of areas.

North Vietnamese ralliers have reported that elements of two NVA regiments are deploying for early attacks on a CIDG camp in western Kontum. Intelligence reports have provided detailed information on enemy plans for early operations in the area south of Da Nang, and less precise information on forthcoming attacks in Phu Yen and other areas of II Corps. A rallier from the NVA 32d Regiment reported his unit was moving supplies into the Ban Me Thuot area. A high-level defector in III Corps reports that an offensive is impending in the Saigon area, and other reports in that region have reflected plans and preparations for an early resumption of offensive action.

Timing

8. Generalized indicators of an impending new phase of offensive action include reports and documents reflecting indoctrination for a "summer campaign," and political and psychological moves by the

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Communists that would undergird their military actions. The pattern of enemy activity suggests that the "winter-spring campaign" tapered off after mid-March. This coincides with references in documents and intelligence reports to recent indoctrination sessions on a "summer campaign." The dates for initiating this new campaign have ranged from late April to early May.

Political Aspects

9. On the political front, the renewed propaganda emphasis accorded by the NLF to the new front organizations created during the Tet offensive suggests an anticipatory move to provide a political basis for forthcoming military operations and/or any negotiations with the US.

10. Hanoi's play of its hand on the negotiations issue will be closely related to Communist actions on the ground in South Vietnam, and these actions' success or lack thereof. The evidence available does not permit confident detailed prediction, but Hanoi would certainly prefer to have any talks with the US commence during a period of Communist success on the ground in South Vietnam rather than at a time when it appeared that allied military and political fortunes were at least temporarily improving.

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